An Idaho Energy Plan
Idaho Energy Education Project
by Bill Chisholm

The Situation:

- Oil and natural gas production is peaking. Natural resources are becoming more valuable.
- Human population is growing rapidly and demanding more resources per person, increasing the competition for existing resources.
- Climate change is a serious consideration and caps the previous two in importance, the burning of fossil fuel must be reduced.
- Supposed "cheap energy" has come at high costs, economically, environmentally and socially. It has created a wasteful attitude about energy consumption.

Education:

- Education is probably the most important part of the plan. It is important to get the public up to speed on the importance of their role in solving this issue.
- Energy education should be added to the public school curriculum. The students should be made aware of the full costs of energy decisions, the environmental and social implications as well as the economic.
- City and county planning agencies should consider the energy impacts of planning and zoning decisions, transportation and on green building options.
- Architects, engineers and builders need to be educated as to the design technologies, passive heating and cooling and efficiency that can be built into homes. We need to build solutions, not more problems.

Conservation and Efficiency:

- The cleanest and cheapest energy is that which we don't use or don't waste.
- The second cleanest and cheapest energy is passive energy, such as wind or sun that can be used with minimum inputs, i.e. clotheslines, curtain, blinds, shade trees or solar tube lighting.
- Energy efficient lights, appliances, timers should be used to minimize the amount of energy that is used.
- Economic incentives such as tax breaks and the investment of pollution credits should be invested in energy efficiency and renewables..
- Studies for the NW Energy Coalition and the Northwest Power Planning Council show there are several thousand megawatts of energy efficiency and conservation available in the region.

Buildings:

- What kind of buildings and where we build them have a major impact energy consumption and other resource demands.
- Long term energy impacts must be considered in the construction, operation of buildings and in transportation to and from those buildings.
- Green buildings (LEED Certified or the equivalent) needs to become the norm. .LEED =Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

- All public buildings should be built to LEED Gold.
- All private residential dwellings over 2,000 sq. ft. should be LEED Gold.
- All private residential dwellings over 1,200 sq. ft. should be LEED Silver.
- LEED Bronze should be the minimum standard.
- LEED costs should not be considered additional expense, but as an investment in a sustainable energy and economic future.

Renewables:

- Where possible individual residents and commercial buildings should be encouraged to invest in net metered renewables such as wind and solar.
- Public buildings especially schools should be using net metered renewables to offset operation costs and showing a public commitment to a sustainable energy future.
- Industry should also be encouraged to invest in net metered renewables to help meet their load requirements.
- Agricultural operations have a good opportunity to use both wind and solar to augment their energy requirements.
- Utilities in Idaho should have a portfolio standard that requires at least 30% of their energy come from renewables within 10 years.
- Idaho should encourage the development of merchant plant renewables such as solar, wind and geothermal.
- Various studies show that there are several thousand megawatts of renewables from all sources, wind, solar and geothermal available in the West.

Thermal production:

- Because of their impact on climate change, thermal technology should be used only after maximum effort has been made in the areas of conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewables.
- Some thermal generation may be necessary to balance renewable production to meet loads.
- Idaho should abandon its self imposed “stringency rule”, so that it can require the highest environmental technology available at thermal plants.
- Nuclear power should be considered only as a last resort and used only minimally.

Transportation:

- The public should be urged to live close to where they work to minimize use of their vehicles.
- Tax incentives should be given to encourage the buying of hybrid and high mileage vehicles.
- Businesses should be encouraged to reduce the number of vehicles their employees drive to work, a bus system, car pool incentives, etc.
- Public mass transit including buses, light rail and trains needs to be planned for and implemented.